

SEPTEMBER, 1943

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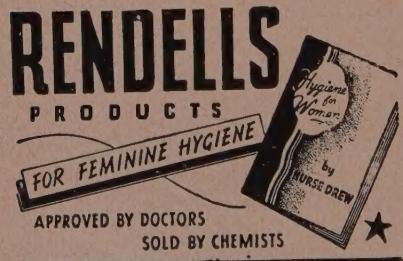
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Edited by Frances Stephens

September, 1943

THREE is every sign of a busy autumn in the theatre with some interesting new productions. Among September arrivals will be *Pink String and Sealing Wax*, a new play by Roland Pertwee, to be presented at the Duke of Yorks on September 1st by Alec L. Rea and E. P. Cliff with Dorothy Hyson, Iris Hoey and David Horne in the cast. Most welcome, too, will be Norman Marshall's Company, which has been doing such brilliant work at Cambridge, Liverpool, Bristol, Bath and elsewhere during the past six months, and which will now open a four weeks' season at the Westminster on September 2nd with Tchekov's *Uncle Vanya*. Vivienne Bennett, Joan Swinstead, Nadine March, Enid Lindsey, Frith Banbury, Harold Scott and Olaf Pooley are in the cast.

Later on we shall be seeing Gordon Harker in a new comedy by Mabel and Denis Constanduros entitled *Acacia Avenue* (opening at Manchester on August 30th). This is Linnit and Dunfee's sixteenth new play by a British author since war began.

One of the most important events of the autumn season will be the production of Maxwell Anderson's *The Wingless Victory*, which Bernard Delfont is putting on, with Wanda Rotha, Manning Whiley, Mary Merrill, André van Gysghem, Rachel Kempson and Clement Ashby in the leading parts.

The Wingless Victory will be the first Maxwell Anderson play to be seen in London, though the author holds a high position in the American theatre. The action passes in New England in 1800, and the play tells how Nathaniel McQueston, a wealthy trader, brings back Princess Oparre, of the Celebes, as his bride, and how they encounter the hostility of the narrow, bigoted community. Michael Redgrave is producing.

Jack Hylton's next production will be *The Love Racket*, a musical comedy with music by Noel Gay and book by Arty Ash,

Over the Footlights

and the late Stanley Lupino. Arthur Askey, Roy Royston and Carol Raye head the cast with Hugh Morton, Finlay Currie, Valerie Tandy and Peggy Carlile.

Also eagerly awaited are the new Courtne-Hulbert show and Firth Shephard's production of *My Sister Eileen*, the big American success.

* * *

At the Lyric Theatre on August 26th Lee Ephraim and Emile Little presented a new revue *Flying Colours*, too late for review in this issue. Binnie Hale and Douglas Byng are the stars, with Jackie Hunter, Inga Anderson, Hal Bryan, Sylvia Leslie, Edward Baxter and Hilde Palmer. Other shows produced on the eve of going to press are George Black's *Variety Comes Back*, with which the Palladium, world-famous variety house, reverts to its original policy for a limited season, and *The Watched Pot*, H. H. Munro and Charles Maude's comedy of manners, the last production in the Arts Theatre's most delightful Festival of Comedy, which will be fully reviewed next month.

* * *

THE sudden death of Owen Nares was a big blow for the theatre. Mr. Nares, whose gracious personality and modest bearing in and out of the theatre were the very antithesis of the flamboyance often associated with men of the theatre, had greatly grown in stature as an actor during the past few years. He had to "live down," as it were, the romantic parts of his earlier "matinée idol" days before he could emerge as an actor of sterner stuff, but this he did with flying colours. *Rebecca* and *The Petrified Forest* marked real triumphs of his career, and we should have witnessed many more increasingly sensitive performances if he had not thus been cut off in the very prime of life. He will be greatly missed.

F.S.

Wherever smoking is permitted—ABDULLAS FOR CHOICE

New Shows of the Month

"Lottie Dundass"

(Vaudeville, July 21st)

LOTTIE DUNDASS is a full-blooded Ladies' Night in the Theatre. When the curtain fell it was evident that London had found an exciting new dramatist in Enid Bagnold, and an entirely new actress in Ann Todd.

With so remarkable a novel as *National Velvet* to her credit, Miss Bagnold knows a good story when she sees one, and has most successfully told the melodramatic history of Lottie Dundass in a vivid two-act play. Inheriting the stage genius of her grandfather and the homicidal tendencies of her father, Lottie, though only a provincial typist, seems to have spent twenty of her three-and-twenty years yearning for the opportunity to convince the world she can act.

The great night comes at the local theatre when the visiting star is rushed off to a nursing home, while her understudy is snow-bound on Salisbury Plain. The part is one of the many Lottie had studied, so the manager decides to reap publicity from the fact that the grand-daughter of a famous star steps in to save the show. As she puts the final touches to her make-up the understudy bursts in after a gruelling journey from the country, and politely requests Lottie to hand over her wig and costume. Left alone in the dressing-room with the woman who stands in the light of her life-long ambition, Lottie proves herself the grim daughter of her father by calmly strangling her rival with a horsehair belt. Telling the company that the understudy has lost her voice and gone home, Lottie sails into the wings to make her triumphant first entrance.

While she is on the stage her mother enters the dressing-room to discover the horrifying price of her daughter's stardom. Lottie sweeps in from the stage with thunderous applause ringing in her ears, but the excitement is too much for her and she experiences one of her periodic heart attacks. Only the immediate administration of certain drops can save her; but the mother withholds the remedy in order to spare her daughter the shame of the gallows.

Ann Todd, as Lottie, looking extraordinarily like Claire Luce with her long blonde bob, proves herself one of the finest tragediennes of the younger generation. Those who only saw her play daughters of High Society in the past will hardly credit her compelling emotional range. Restraint is the keynote of Sybil Thorndike's superb performance as the simple, understanding mother, but in greatness it easily ranks with her former and more flamboyant achievements in tragedy.

E.J.

"Mr. Bolfry"

(Westminster, August 3rd)

THIS is without doubt James Bridie's finest play to date, and a sheer delight, like all his work for the theatre.

Mr. Bolfry will take his place among our most entrancing stage characters, not, of course, forgetting his umbrella, and we can thank Mr. Bridie, and maybe Beelzebub too, for giving us, born of the dreariness that is Scots Calvinism, a most delectable devil whose Hades-inspired sermon is a model for all the word and phrase-spinning "meenisters" who ever lived to keep the Sabbath so holy that never a smile breaks through the gloom.

Into the story of the grim Mr. McCrimmon of the Free Kirk and the revolt of the young people who find themselves willy nilly in his manse, Mr. Bridie has woven many an old theological argument on the problem of good and evil, and so skilfully that the dour minister comes near to hobnobbing with the plausible sophistry of the devil himself. Not that Mr. Bolfry, in his sober clerical black, looks in the least like the underworld, though thence apparently he has been conjured with the aid of the young people's dabbling in ancient witchcraft in the manse parlour.

Alastair Sim has never given a better performance than his study of Mr. McCrimmon,

(Left) : **NORA SWINBURNE** who has been playing Valerie Taylor's part in *A Month in the Country* at the St. James's Theatre during Miss Taylor's absence on holiday.





The West End is fortunate in its stars just now. Here are four of our most intelligent and charming actresses, all appearing in big H. M. Tennent successes. *Above left*: Marian Spencer in *Love for Love*, now at the Haymarket; *above*, Edith Evans in *Heartbreak House* at the Cambridge; *left outside*, Margaretta Scott in *Watch on the Rhine* at the Aldwych; and *left*, Googie Withers in the latest Priestley play, *They Came to a City*, at the Globe.

whose religion disgusts the younger generation from the freer air of the South. Ellis Irving and Harry Ross as the two soldiers, Sheila Brownrigg as Jean, the minister's niece, and Jenny Laird as Morag, the not so simple maid, are all excellently cast and give splendid performances. Sophie Stewart gives a delicious impression of Mrs. McCrimmon, who treats Mr. Bolfry with a grand unconcern, and as Mr. Bolfry Raymond Lovell is irresistible. Fortunately the short season at the Westminster is to be followed by a run at the Playhouse. *Mr. Bolfry* must not be missed. F.S.

"War and Peace" (*Phoenix*, August 6th)

THE colossal task of putting Tolstoy's classic on the stage has been accomplished with dignity and sincerity; nor has London seen a more astonishing piece of stagecraft, and we shall perhaps see more of this clever cinematic technique in presenting epic works.

But it is this very strength of presentation that is the weakness of the play. Against the chameleon-like backgrounds (there are thirty-two scenes!) the actors have little chance to build up their characters into a continuous whole, and it says

much for their skill that so many excellent performances are achieved.

Outstanding pieces of acting come from Peter Illing as Napoleon, Frederick Valk as Kutuzov, Barry Morse as Prince Andrey and Henry Oscar as Paroshin, who has the unenviable task of narrator during the whole progress of the play. David Dawson's Pierre somewhere lacked conviction, but that may have been the fault of the disjointed nature of the piece. The Natasha of Paulette Preney, however, was entirely without the magnetic and spiritual quality one would expect.

What live in the memory most are the scenes featuring Napoleon—always excellently done, and one or two scenes of a minor character—one might almost call them tableaux, notably that between Pierre and the French officer at Osip Bazdyer's house, and between Pierre and the prisoner Platon (Julian Somers).

Above all, all praise to Julius Gellner, who produced, and Hein Heckroth, who was responsible for décor and costumes. A vast amount of technique and imagination must lie behind so ambitious a production, and on this side the result is flawless and most fascinating as a spectacle. F.S.



Edward Mandinian Studio.

Mona Inglesby as "Good Deeds" and Leslie French as "Everyman" in the new ballet *Everyman* which is presented by International Ballet in their current season at the Lyric Theatre.

THE International Ballet Company began an 8-weeks season at the Lyric on June 28th with a programme composed of *Fête Bohème* and *Giselle*.

A programme note explains that *Fête Bohème* "is interpreted in the classical style of a divertissement ballet with no attempt at national authenticity," but this does not excuse the fact that Harold Turner's choreography seems constantly to pull against Dvorak's music. Musical feeling is an essential in a choreographer and the best way for anyone reasonably musical to enjoy this ballet is to shut his eyes (the orchestral playing was excellent). The dance arrangement is varied but untidy, and Gerd Larsen, a good dancer new to this company, cannot avoid the impression, any more than Tarakanova could, that she is about to break a couple of ankles in her variation. The ballet can only get across by gaiety and prettiness, and this the company and Beryl Dean's charming costumes and décor provide. Anne Negus, particularly, once again proves herself a young dancer very well worth watching. She also dances a very workmanlike *Papillon* (it is not her fault that she has not the impalpable aerial flutter only a Markova possesses), though her *Sylphides* Waltz—like that of another very promising young dancer, Pauline Clayden of the Wells, who has also recently taken up this part—suffers from a slight stiffness of the arms.

Giselle is a great ballet, but it is also a ballet of a definite romantic period and atmosphere which needs extremely delicate handling if it is to seem moving and not just a museum piece. The tasteless extravagance of the International production puts *Giselle* on the plane of an Ivor Novello musical show, and this, plus a slowness of pace throughout the first scene and the general failure of the company to give the mime any life and meaning, kills the ballet. Mona Inglesby is never less than sincere and her dancing, as always, shows great musicality, but her first scene badly needs gaiety and speed and she lacks both

International Ballet

—THE NEW SEASON

By Audrey Williamson

the volatility of temperament and the ethereality this part, in its entirety, demands. In *Swan Lake* she is, with her reserved poise, wide arabesque line and beautiful arms and hands, much better suited. Turner's scintillating *batterie*, with its crisp hard beat, gives the second Act of *Giselle* an exciting touch of virtuosity, but the corps de ballet here, as in *Swan Lake* where they have a distracting jumpiness, is poor. In *Sylphides* they have surprisingly improved, both in pattern and *port de bras*, but in *Carnaval* the atmosphere is destroyed through nearly all the dancers "dropping" their character before they are out of sight of the audience. Turner's Harlequin struck me as careless in finish, but Nina Tarakanova's Columbine is delicious, and I would personally rather see this ballet imperfectly done than an indifferent new ballet brilliantly danced. The quality of choreography such as Fokine's can never be fully obscured. It is ten years since I first saw *Carnaval*, but the loveliness of invention in a dance such as the *pas de trois* for Chiarina and the two girls in white still comes as a surprise and delight.

The *pièce de résistance* of this season was the new ballet based on the old Morality play *Everyman*; the *pièce* being provided by Mona Inglesby as choreographer and the *résistance*, I regret to say, by the present writer! This is not only because the theology of this play seems out of tune with modern thought. One critic has seized on the failure of this ballet as proof of the unsuitability of a literary subject to ballet form, which is like saying that *Hamlet* is an unsuitable subject for a play on the strength of the version by Shakespeare's predecessor! Actually, the failure merely proves (a) that Miss Inglesby is not a dramatic choreographer and (b) that the theory of "dance for the sake of dance" in ballet is untenable unless the dance can be made perfectly expressive of subject, character and the progress of the story. (The view that ballet should remain abstract dance and not "express" anything can be dismissed as reducing ballet from an art to mere mechanics beneath the serious consideration of people of any breadth of cultural outlook. In history it is always the "dance-crank" who have eventually stultified ballet and the people with something to express—the Noverres, the Fokines—who have revived it.)

Mona Inglesby's failure with character is shown by the fact that the dances of Death and the Temptress are equally inexpressive of their subject and could actually be inter-

(Continued 2nd column on page 32)

Emlyn Williams—Playwright par Excellence

by

Eric Johns

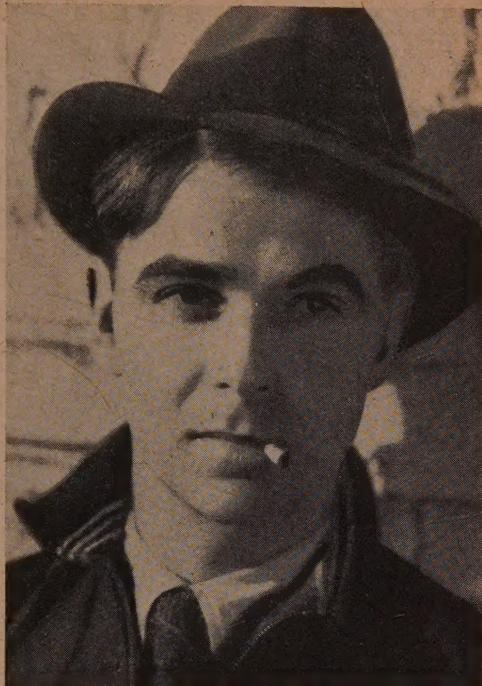
OWING to the fact that Emlyn Williams is both an actor and a director, only five playgoers in every hundred fully realise the range of his accomplishment as a playwright.

The public has been lavish in appreciation of this young man's contribution to the theatre, never grudging his position on the crest of popular success. *Night Must Fall*, the finest study in the macabre yet seen on our stage, was a memorable hit in London, and was later filmed in Hollywood; *The Corn is Green* ran for over 700 performances in London, and has just concluded a run of two and a half years in America, enabling Sybil Thorndike and Ethel Barrymore to score outstanding triumphs in their mellow careers; while *The Morning Star*, his telling tribute to Londoners' heroism in the Blitz, was the first real war play to be seen in London, and has so far outstripped all others by running for a year on Shaftesbury Avenue.

Tens of thousands of theatregoers have applauded his plays and discussed them enthusiastically in their homes and in gallery queues. He would be the last to complain of not receiving ample recognition; but without reading a play by Emlyn Williams it is quite impossible to assess the complete measure of his achievement. As it is estimated that only one playgoer in twenty ever reads a play, it can be fairly accurately assumed that 95 per cent. of his admirers still have an inadequate conception of his prolific gifts.

His plays are unique in being among the most readable to be found on any bookshelf. Other dramatists may be satisfied if they write a play that sells out the house, but Williams goes a step further by writing a play that also sells in the bookshop. His secret lies in lavishing endless care upon the writing of stage directions, thereby making his play as easy to read as a novel, without laying any undue strain upon the imagination of the reader.

So many less experienced, or more slovenly dramatists made play reading a dull and difficult task by failing to describe the settings, or even the age and appearance of the characters. Williams, on the other hand, tells the reader all he ought to know, so that even one who has seen the play produced has as little advantage as possible over the reader who has never heard of it.



John Vickers.

EMLYN WILLIAMS

as the page boy, Danny, in the revival of his first great success, *Night Must Fall*, in which, together with *The Morning Star*, he is at present touring the country.

The setting is vividly described at the opening of each act, and if the lighting has any significant bearing upon the mood of the scene it is also touched upon, together with any details of dress which are a key to the character of those wearing them. On such occasions he practically turns novelist; but once the scene is set, with the characters vividly alive in the reader's eye, he resumes the role of dramatist and concentrates upon his dialogue.

Turn to his masterly thumbnail sketches of the leading characters in *Night Must Fall*. "Mrs. Bramson is sitting in a wheeled chair in the centre of the room. She is a fussy, discontented, common woman of fifty-five, old-fashioned both in clothes and coiffure." Of Dan, he writes in the stage directions for his first entrance, "His personality varies very considerably as the play proceeds; the impression he gives at the moment is one of totally disarming good humour and childlike unselfconsciousness. It would need a very close observer to suspect that there

(Continued overleaf)

is something wrong somewhere—that his personality is completely assumed."

The published scripts of Emlyn Williams' plays are not finally written until after their production on the stage. He then revises and edits them with scrupulous care, so that the reader can reap all the advantage of the producer's touch, which is so often responsible for introducing an effective situation or a thrilling curtain, not immediately apparent in the original script. So cunningly are all these effects incorporated into this author's plays that they crystallise on the printed page some of the most memorable moments in the theatre of the past decade. In his inimitable manner he has immortalised that terrific final scene he played with Dame May Whitty in *Night Must Fall*, when as the crime-crazed 'Dan,' he returns by night to the lonely bungalow where the widow has been left alone:—

(The front door bangs. Mrs. Bramson collapses on the sofa, terrified, her enormous Bible clasped to her breast. "Oh, Lord, help me . . . help me . . . Oh, Lord, help me." (Muttering, her eyes closed) . . . "Forgive us our trespasses . . ." The curtains are suddenly parted. It is DAN, a cigarette between his lips. He stands motionless, his feet planted apart, holding the curtains. There is murder in his face. She is afraid to look, but is forced to at last.)

If genius is the infinite capacity for taking pains, then no one is more surely a genius than this author when he is writing stage directions. It often takes him quite as long to write his directions as his dialogue; the words are chosen and strung with infinite and loving care, so that they convey the subtlest shades of meaning and build up to a situation as surely as do the inflexions and gestures of actors in the theatre.

Suspense is a powerful and effective weapon in the hand of the dramatist, and Williams is so clever at writing his stage directions that he can give the reader just the same feeling of suspense in those italicised lines as the actor gives the playgoer across the footlights. Imagine a character entering at the climax of a thrilling act with something concealed in his hand. The audience cannot see what he is holding. The leading lady cries, "*What have you got in your hand?*" "*A gun.*" is the shattering reply, as the man discloses a shining revolver, neatly trained on her heart. The suspense value of that scene could be wrecked for the reader if the dramatist recorded it thus: "*He enters with a gun concealed in his hand.*" The reader would already know the secret before the heroine posed her dramatic question. Emlyn Williams is too great an artist to write his directions with so clumsy a pen. He tells the reader all he should know, but not before he should know it.

His subtle choice of words is admirably illustrated in a few lines from *Night Must Fall*:—

Olivia crosses the room and comes back again.

Mrs. Bramson: "What are you walking up and down for? What's the matter with you? Aren't you happy here?"

With infinite care he uses the word "crosses" in the stage directions instead of the more usual "walks up and down" because Mrs. Bramson uses the expression in the very next instance. Such fine artistry so easily escapes the reader, and is, of course, meant to escape him.

I read in a play recent that "*outside the window (stage left) the villas of the town can be seen on the backcloth, on which is painted the sunset.*" The very word "backcloth" destroys the last shred of illusion. Plays depict real people and should be just as alive and actual as any other work of art. Emlyn Williams would probably have written: "*Through the window the picturesque white roofs of the town are silhouetted against a warm Mediterranean sunset.*" His plays take place in a real world; they ring with conviction, doing so much more than describing the movements of tinselled puppets against painted canvas.

His characters are flesh and blood, speaking our own familiar language. In consequence he offers the reader guidance where doubt may arise as to how a line should be spoken—whether ironically, passionately, or tenderly. The tone in which a line is delivered, or a significant pause either before or after the line, may make all the difference to the meaning. In Williams' work nothing is left to the chance guess of the reader. All is indicated as clearly as the musician's score is marked with "piano" and "forte," enabling the reader to get full value out of the play without having to rely upon an actor to interpret it for him.

Unlike Shaw, Williams does not bury his dialogue under a mass of stage direction; one does not have to read a book of introduction before the curtain rises; nor is one asked to digest a hundred pages of epilogue after the characters have left the stage. His directions are used with perfect restraint.

In these days when so many of us are denied our beloved theatre it is a fine thing to recapture some of the old glory by reading plays, and Williams deserves our gratitude for perfecting the difficult and neglected art of writing stage directions, and making his plays live for those theatregoers who are unfortunate enough to have no theatre within their reach. In short, Emlyn Williams, with J. B. Priestley, should go down in theatrical history as one of the few dramatists who has succeeded in making his plays as completely entertaining to the reader as to the playgoer.

PICTURES

BY
JOHN
VICKERS

(Right) :

JACK
BUCHANAN
and
ELSIE
RANDOLPH

in their charming
duet in Act I
called "I'm look-
ing for a Melody."



“*It’s Time to Dance*”

AT THE WINTER GARDEN

THIS sparkling new show marks Jack Buchanan's triumphant return to the West End after an absence of six years. With book by Douglas Furber and L. Arthur Rose and music by a number of well-known composers *It's Time to Dance* pro-

vides grand entertainment. The show is produced by Jack Buchanan with dances by Buddy Bradley, and the whole of the brilliant cast enter into the spirit with a irresistibly lighthearted and pre-war tou-



JACK BUCHANAN

as

Willmott Brown



ELSIE RANDOLPH

as

Marian Kane

FRED EMNEY

as

Lord D'Arcy





MARJORIE BROOKS
as
Conchita D'Alvarez



BUDDY BRADLEY
as
himself

(Below) :
ANTHONY HOWARD
as
Jim Anthony



(Below) :
DARIA LUNA
as
prima ballerina





(Above left):
Lord D'Arcy: Would you mind launching
me?

Lord D'Arcy (Fred Emney), Scotland Yard sleuth, is on the track of a gang of international jewel thieves, and his search has brought him to the luxurious Milan Hotel. With him are a couple of detectives (Van Booleen and James Roy).



(Above):
Auntie: I think you had better go in for
your nice swim.

Mabel Twemlow as Lady Dorothy Brown fusses around her impecunious young nephew, Willmott Brown (Jack Buchanan), whose extravagance is her constant concern.

(Left):
Willie: Well the coat was rather like that
one.

Tiger: But this isn't yours?

Willie: Good Lord no, I wouldn't be seen
dead in it.

Tiger Delano, notorious gangster (Max Kirby), has stolen Willie's clothes and left
his own in the bathing tent.



D'Arcy: You'll come quietly.
I have a posse with me.

Willie: A Maltese posse or a
Siamese posse?

Lord D'Arcy mistakes Willie
for Tiger Delano.



Lord D'Arcy, recognising
Willie as an old friend, per-
suades him to masquerade as
Tiger Delano and discover the
plans of the gang.



D'Arcy: Excuse me not bend-
ing any lower. Not enough
coupons.

Lord D'Arcy meets the
glamorous Conchita D'Alvarez
(Marjorie Brooks), whose magni-
ficent jewels are the reason
for the gang's presence at the
Hotel.



Marian: I'm livid. He will call me child . . . little woman. . . . Before I know where I am he'll be telling me the facts of life.

Marian Kane, well-known star, resents the fatherly attitude of Willie, who takes her for a struggling member of the chorus at Buddy Bradley's School of Dancing (see above).

(Above right):

Willie: In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to love.

Marian: Does it?

(Right):

D'Arcy: Who am I this time?

Willie: Not the Doctor's Dilemma.

D'Arcy puts Willie through a course on the great lovers of history.

Willie and Buddy Bradley sing "Yankie Doodle Came to Town," one of the show's most attractive numbers.

(Below):

Willie meets the gang. Their leader, Jim Anthony, is Marian's fiancé, although, of course, she is quite unaware of the shady side to his character. Willie has no difficulty in persuading them that he is Tiger Delano, whom they have never seen before, and is soon introduced to their plans for obtaining Conchita's pearl necklace.



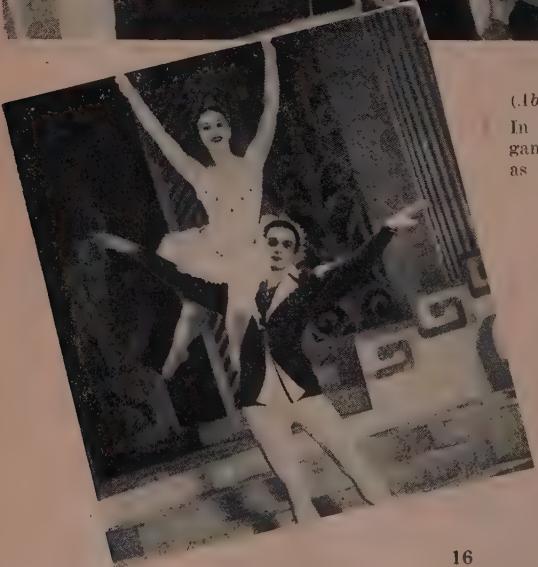
(.1bove):

The members of the gang, *left to right*, are Jim Anthony (Anthony Howard), The Professor (Andrew Leigh), Al Carlina (Harry Lane), The Champ (Joe Quigley), Bugs Revanti (Charles Minor) and standing, Snowy (Pat Hagan).



(Left):

Elsie Randolph as Marian tries out a new "little girl" number, "There's Scandal in the Nursery Rhymes."



(.Ibove) :

In order to overhear the plotting of the gang, D'Arcy and Willie disguise themselves as pianist and violinist for an uproariously funny musical interlude.

Daria Luna and Nevill Astor in the delightful ballet they dance in the Ballroom of the Hotel.

(Below) : *Willie* and *D'Arcy* in *Marihuana*.

Willie: You are the *Mona de Milo*—the *Venus de Lisa*.

D'Arcy: And you are a twerp!

Willie gets in a bit of a muddle over his carefully rehearsed love scene with *Conchita*.



(Below) :

Conchita: Show me love.

Willie: What here? They don't even allow Sunday openings.

Willie is no match for the amorous *D'Alvarez*.



The spirited finale to Act I. Elsie Randolph, Jack Buchanan, Fred Emney, Marjorie Brooks and company dance the "Marihuana."

(Below) :

Conchita : My pearls! These are *not* my pearls. These are false! Oh, mon Dieu!

Willie has taken the real pearls and substituted a fake necklace. Jim Anthony and Lord D'Arcy register surprise while the guests gather round, including Marian (left) and (centre back) the Earl of Marchester (Humphrey Kent).



(Below) : Conchita faints and Willie, after some extraordinary convolutions, passes the brandy.



(Right) :

A spot of trouble breaks out among members of the gang on their way to their secret rendezvous. When they are waiting for Willie to arrive with the pearls the real Tiger Delano puts in a belated appearance and reveals Willie's true identity. Later on things look very ugly for our hero, but by a clever bit of bluffing and the help of Buddy Bradley he manages to scare the gang off and also to escape the time bomb which they had left as a little present.



(Above) :

D'Arcy and Willie congratulate each other on the arrest of the gang. Jim Anthony is in fact whisked off the scene at the very hour when his marriage to Marian was to have taken place.

(Left) :

Conchita : It has a heavenly view.

D'Arcy : I know, there's a hole in the roof.

D'Arcy modestly shows Conchita D'Alvarez a picture of his ancestral home.



(Above) :

D'Arcy: Here, take this to pay for the honeymoon.

Willie is happily installed as bridegroom in place of Jim Anthony and D'Arcy, who has just arranged to marry Conchita himself, offers the happy couple one of her jewels to defray honeymoon expenses. (Left) Marian and Willie sing another tuneful number entitled "An Old-fashioned Wedding."



(Below) :

The full company take the curtain at the end of this delightfully gay and witty show.



The Influence of Stanislavsky

HOW SOVIET DRAMA STUDENTS PRODUCED
SHERIDAN'S "THE DUENNA" IN MOSCOW

By Professor Mikhail Morozov

RUSSIA'S outstanding theatre personality, the late Constantine Stanislavsky, he who, together with Vladimir Nemirovich Danchenko, founded the Moscow Art Theatre, was not only an ingenious producer and great actor, but the creator of the new "system" for training actors as well. And it was in his Studio, to which he devoted the latter years of his life, that Constantine Stanislavsky was putting many of his new ideas to the test. At that time, I was invited to the Studio to deliver lectures on Shakespeare, as Stanislavsky was preparing to produce *Hamlet*. It was his last great endeavour in the field of play production, which was unhappily cut short by his death. Here it is interesting to mention that Stanislavsky was then keen on laying emphasis on Hamlet's youth, and so had a young girl to play the lead.

The Stanislavsky System

It is the aim of the Stanislavsky system to train the actor to bring home to the spectator the living truth of every movement and every word; to discard false pathos and "empty" gesture, and to find within himself, and not through slavish imitation of the life emotions focussed in the part he is called upon to impersonate.

In the latter years of his life Stanislavsky set before himself a new task; he wanted to blend this intrinsic truth with the outward plastic gesture—to achieve natural realism in opera, and at the same time retain vocal brilliancy.

Thus, Stanislavsky founded the Opera Theatre (recently merged with the Musical Theatre, founded by Nemirovich Danchenko), to spread his "system" to the operatic stage.

To the very last days of his life, Stanislavsky was a passionate seeker of new paths in theatrical art, and his Studio was his great laboratory. After his death, his pupils continued to pursue the path mapped out by their great teacher.

The Studio and the War

The young actor, Mikhail Kedrov, of the Moscow Art Theatre, became the leader of the Studio after Stanislavsky's death. At first, under his guidance, the Studio went through a long period of apprenticeship and later made its debut in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, a serious and well-thought-out, but by no means flawless, production.

For three years the young actors of the

Studio were rehearsing *Romeo and Juliet*. Rehearsals were interrupted by the outbreak of war, and the Studio evacuated from Moscow. For a long period we did not hear of the work of this youthful actors' community, fostered by Stanislavsky.

Sheridan's "The Duenna"

A short while ago, however, the Studio returned to Moscow, delighting the Capital's theatre-lovers with a fascinating and highly-amusing presentation of Richard Sheridan's *The Duenna*. Everything connected with this performance, including the designs of sets and the music, goes to the credit of the Studio teamwork.

The young actors had themselves created the Russian version, keeping as close as possible to Sheridan's plot, thereby displaying an admirable understanding of the very spirit of the English Comedy of the 18th century. The play, which bears closer resemblance to Musical Comedy than to Comic Opera, was also directed by Stanislavsky's young pupils. The acting, singing and dancing of the youthful cast are impeccable. With breathless expectation, the audience follows the action of the play, the splendid acting now and then eliciting outbursts of applause.

What pleased me most in the performance was that Sheridan's spirit was rendered, not through outward "stylisation," but by profound insight into each of the characters, showing that Stanislavsky's pupils had proved themselves worthy of their teacher. Here Sheridan is interpreted as an optimist, and, as such, is most acceptable to Soviet audiences, completely won over by *The School for Scandal*, produced by the Moscow Art Theatre. It must be said here that Russians are keenly susceptible to English humour. Russian College students are extremely fond of Chaucer and derive much pleasure from Fielding and Goldsmith; Charles Dickens, it goes without saying, is a great favourite.

Sergei Prokofieff has just completed his opera version of *The Duenna*, which will be staged by the Moscow Bolshoi Opera Theatre Company.

Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, mentioned in this article as co-founder with Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theatre, died at the end of April at the age of eighty-five. An appreciation of his great work for the Russian Theatre, extending over forty-five years, will be included next month.

Whispers from the Wings

BY
LOOKER ON

IT is encouraging to learn that some of the actors who are now in the Armed Forces still find opportunities to produce and act in plays in whatever time they have free from their duties. Many units are inaccessible to ENSA, particularly those on Active Service, and some of these would be without entertainment if it were not for the voluntary efforts of those members of the profession who happen to be stationed with them. Plays are being performed in the strangest places and under the most unusual conditions, and incidentally an interest in the theatre is being stimulated among many whose only entertainment, prior to the war, was the cinema.

A letter just received from Donald Layne-Smith, the Shakespearean actor, now with



DONALD
LAYNE-
SMITH

as "Feste"
in *Twelfth
Night*, Strat-
ford - upon -
Avon, 1938.

the R.A.F. in the Middle East, encloses a programme of a performance at an R.A.F. Station out there. The plays performed—*The Monkey's Paw*, *The Night Before* and two scenes from *Richard II*—were all produced by Mr. Layne-Smith, who also played the part of Richard II. He gives an interesting description of how "The Shandur Drama Club" came to be formed:—

"It may interest you to know that I have done bits of Shakespeare for the R.A.F. out here in the desert area. I was rather nervous at first and started with 'Once more unto the breach' and 'This royal throne of Kings'; then I became a little more ambitious and formed a drama club at my station, and did the ghost scenes from *Hamlet* in battle dress with two one-act modern plays. This was a great success, and everyone voted the *Hamlet* scenes the best item. This encouraged me, so I started rehearsals on *The Monkey's Paw* and *Richard II* (Deposition and Pomfret); also I had the stage improved, by making an apron 5ft. with steps into the audience and extending back 3ft. This gave me a proscenium opening of 24ft. and depth 22ft., which you must admit is very good for the 'desert.' I then got a curtain surround and drop curtain made, and with the aid of the boys, who became carpenters and

painters, managed to make a presentable set. It looked charming. I also did a Western Desert tour with the camp concert party and recited the 'bard' to most appreciative audiences. There are so many young fellows, and some even as old as 25, who have never been inside a theatre, but I have given them a small taste of it, and I feel my work has not been wasted."

Before the war Mr. Layne-Smith gave many excellent performances at Stratford-on-Avon and with Donald Wolfit's company at the Kingsway Theatre, both in the "singing" rôles (he was a delightful Feste) and in as wide a range of characters as Iago, Claudio in *Measure for Measure* and Tranio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and many playgoers who enjoyed these performances will wish this young actor, and others doing similar work, good luck and a speedy return to the theatre.

* * * * *

NEWS also comes of two other young men of the theatre, who both gave up promising stage careers long before their age groups were called (they both joined up a fortnight before the war) and have since done a great deal to cheer their fellows in the army. They are Norman Earland (Driver Norman S. Smith) and Driver Gerry S. Lloyd, of "The Aristocrats Concert Party," Middle East Forces.

Below is an extract from a paper published out there:—

" . . . After having spent two years in the Middle East, the 'Aristocrats' are still going strong at the same high standard of entertainment in their third tour in a new N.A.A.D.I. show, 'Good-bye Blues.'

"With artists assembled by Murray Mac-Donald, who produced *Call it a Day* and *Good-bye Mr. Chips* on the London stage, it is not surprising that those finally selected should be up to such excellent form. Norman Earland and Gerry Lloyd, too, are of the London stage.

"Earland's manner in putting over a song 'A Bevy of Beauty for Bevin,' all about 'each little cutie, doing her duty' made the audience reluctant to part with him.

"As Mme. Paprika Patsenhoffa, Gerry Lloyd had the audience in hysterics with female impersonations and a song called 'The Pest of Budapest.' As straight acting was his rôle in *Civvy Street*, the wartime change-over says much for his versatility. Both he and Earland appeared later in a hilarious dialogue entitled 'A Wartime Scene in Hyde Park,' in which they were two realistic policewomen, and again, towards the end, in 'Napoleon's Farewell,' with Earland as Josephine or Joe.

“Lottie Dundass” at the Vaudeville



Mrs. Dundass: He told your father he was a fool to have got a woman that bred like a rabbit. Lottie Dundass is always asking her mother what kind of things her famous actor grandfather used to say. Mrs. Dundass makes no attempt to hide the fact that he despised his son—Lottie's father.

ANN TODD as Lottie and SYBIL THORNDIKE as Mrs. Dundass in the opening scene.

PICTURES BY JOHN VICKERS

A NEW playwright is something of a sensation in these days, and it is therefore a great pleasure to record that Enid Bagnold, already well-known as a novelist, has given the West End a really gripping psychological play in *Lottie Dundass*. With great skill she has depicted in the character of Lottie an enthralling, alternately attractive and repellent if sometimes tragic figure, whose mental kink is not so blatantly apparent as to make the terrible consequences inevitable, and who leaves one pleasantly ruminating as to whether she was in fact an embryo genius or merely the pathetic counterpart of her “ham” actor

mad father. Lottie, of course, dominates the play, but Miss Bagnold has shown equal care in the drawing of the supporting characters, chief of whom is Lottie's mother, the kindly, worn and altogether sane Mrs. Dundass, whose love for her wayward daughter is something to marvel at.

The acting of Ann Todd and Sybil Thorndike is worth going a long way to see. Miss Todd puts herself right at the top with her brilliant study of Lottie. The other members of the cast give excellent performances and much, too, is owed to Irene Hentschel's skilful direction.



Lottie (tyrannically to Rose) : I told you to wait at the bus!

Rose : I got so cold.

Lottie's selfishness and unashamed egotism are apparent from our first glimpse of her, particularly in her treatment of those she professes to love most—her mother and her friend, Rose (played by Renée Ascherson).

(Right) :

Mrs. Dundass : It was typing you wanted my daughter to do?

Mr. Pratt (Charles Sewell) : Just for two or three days, I'm behind with my accounts.

Lottie reluctantly tackles a boring job.



(Left) :

Rose : I don't always give in to you, Lottie.

Lottie : You seem like something—in the way!

Lottie is jealous because Rose is being sent to the local theatre to do typing for the manager of the touring company which has just arrived. Lottie's whole life is centred around the stage. She imagines herself a great actress kept from her career by the weak heart she undoubtedly has: a situation she dramatises on every possible occasion. Her mother bears with her with a heavy heart, realising only too well her likeability to her father, who was found guilty but insane after a motiveless murder.





Mrs. Dundass: Put her down, Leppie, put her down.

Lottie, eager for any sensation life can offer, callously leads on the infatuated Leppie Dow (John Jarvis), a nice steady young man to whom Mrs. Dundass had felt it her duty to tell the tragic story of Lottie's father.



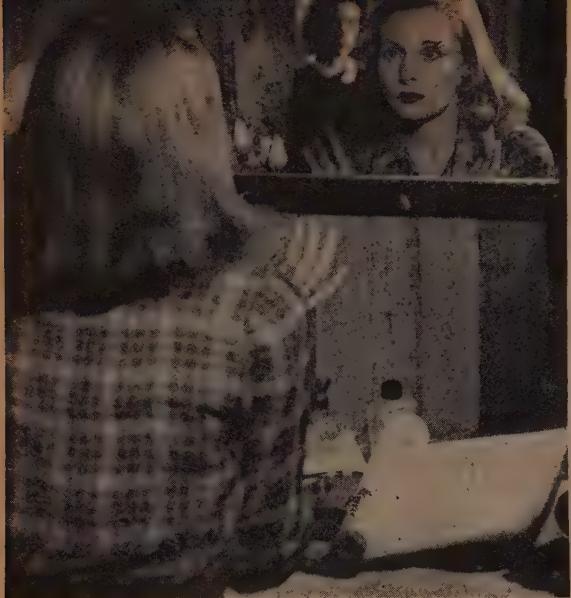
Porphyry (Bruce Winston): You've got to get here somehow—buy a car—hire a train. Get someone with some sense!

At the theatre Rose finds Mr. Porphyry, the manager, in a raging temper. The leading lady has developed appendicitis on the opening day, and her understudy is snowed up in Salisbury.



Lottie: And you, I suppose, play opposite me.

On the strength of her being the granddaughter of the famous actor, the frantic Mr. Porphyry agrees to see Lottie at the suggestion of Rose, who knows her friend is familiar with every word of the part. Lottie sweeps in with an air of complete self-possession, much to the amusement of the assembled company. (L-R: Hargrave Pawson as Peter Garanty; Miki Iveria as Miki (on Garanty's knee); Frederick Cooper as Mr. Hearn and Mignon O'Doherty as Madgie.)



(Below) :

Eva: I'm here! I'm here! Quick—where do I dress?

Madgie: We thought you'd never make it—we got another girl in.

At the eleventh hour the understudy *Eva Wiltshire* (*Helen Horsey*) arrives. *Lottie* is swept aside, told to remove her costume, and forgotten. *Lottie* is numbed by this terrible blow and lingers on while the distraught understudy struggles into her costume, at the same time frantically trying to memorise her part. The inevitable happens. Very deliberately *Lottie* strangles the girl who stands in her way.

Lottie: Those get through who are selfish—great men—poets—actors—all selfish.

Rose: Perhaps you are.

After a hasty try-out, Mr. Porphyry, with many misgivings, agrees to give *Lottie* the part. She is transported, and proceeds to dress for the performance with uncanny self-assurance, certain she will be a big success, the true descendant of her famous grandfather.

(Below) :

Mr. Hearn: From the management, my dear.

Lottie: My dressing room! And the management puts tulips in.



Lottie: I can't remember—I can't remember, either.

For a brief moment Lottie loses her nerve, but only for a moment. Thenceforward she is walking on air, exalted and sure of herself. She dresses hastily, telling her amazed friend that the understudy has been taken ill and won't be appearing after all.

(Below):

Lottie: If you move after I've left you, you'll break the power that *you* have over me.

Rose: I'll sit here.

Lottie sets the unsuspecting Rose sentinel over the body behind the curtain.



(Below):

Lottie: Look at me! Look at us! Look at Rose! I've got my stage coming to me!

Lottie, her manner hectic, preens herself before the amused and somewhat cynical reporter who looks in during the first interval. She has had a good reception on the stage in spite of her unorthodox stage technique.

J. O. Twiss as the reporter, Janet Barrow as Janet, the dresser.





(Above left):

Mrs. Dundass: Leave go of me! What are you trying to tell me?

Rose: Don't go—don't go—don't look!

After sitting for two acts in the dressing room at Lottie's demand, Rose discovers the grim secret.

(Above):

Lottie: She came between us—so I swept her away—he called me.

Mrs. Dundass (to Rose): Get a pencil—write it down—get it down—what she says—it was what he said afterwards that saved him.

(Left):

Mrs. Dundass: I done right, Rose, I done right.

Rose: I think you did—it's too much for me to know—I think you must have done right.

The strain brings on one of Lottie's periodic heart attacks. Her mother deliberately withholds the capsule that will save her life. So ends Lottie's crowded hour of glorious life, with the last scene of her first play still unacted.

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The Forces Want Good Entertainment

AMATEURS CAN MEET AN URGENT NEED Says E. W. Hayden

THE usually accepted idea of entertainment for the Forces is that of some sort of variety show, with plenty of chorus singing and what is known as "smut." The result has been a certain monotony in troop shows with resultant boredom for the men. I have heard officers and men express many times a heartfelt desire for "something different."

Early last winter a small group of enthusiastic amateur actors decided that they would like to try the experiment of presenting good drama to the Forces in camp and aerodrome. Difficulties were obvious and numerous. Enough people had to be found who had the necessary time, the necessary talent, and sufficient keenness. A suitable play had to be found, preferably one requiring one set, few props and a small cast. Scenery, lighting and sound effects also presented a problem. The greatest difficulty, however, was transport. No petrol was obtainable, and at one time it seemed as if the whole scheme would have to be abandoned.

Thanks to hard work and determination, all difficulties were solved at length. The actors, all members of the People's Theatre A.D.C., of Cambridge, were secured. They agreed to be presented under the name of their own club by Progressive Amateur Productions (P.A.P.), as the new venture was called. The play, *The Day is Gone*, by W. Chetham Strode, which had previously been performed by the People's Theatre, was found to be very suitable, and was decided upon for the tour. A miniature set of scenery, only seven feet high, was built; the lack of height in all the huts where the play was to be performed making the use of a full-sized set impossible. A portable switchboard was also made, which could be run from any electric lighting system; and from it a gramophone and amplifier were also operated. The problem of transport was solved through the kind offices of the Y.M.C.A. Their officials saw the play and decided to tour it round the camps and aerodromes where they had huts. They provided a van and petrol for the company and scenery, paid royalties and helped generally in many ways.

At last the night of the first presentation arrived. Hopes were high, fears and doubts were many. Would the men like a serious play, or would they give us the "bird"? The stage was small, much smaller than anything that the company had used before. The dressing accommodation was primitive, but the lighting was good. The hut was crowded with an audience of officers, men and women. Almost from the beginning it became clear that the play was a success. Laughs were frequent and increasingly hearty as the evening proceeded. The whole worked up to a terrible climax in the third act, and the thrill that came to the company as they felt that climax grip the audience will not be forgotten easily. There were many curtain calls at the final curtain and thunderous applause. There was no shadow of a doubt that the experiment had started very well indeed.

The tour lasted for nearly three months. The play has been presented in all sorts of places: large halls, with good stages and lighting; tiny huts, with only one light for the stage; an old barn, with light provided by a motor engine running outside. Everywhere the initial success was repeated. Sometimes the size of the stage allowed hardly any moves to be made, sometimes the audience was hard to win at the beginning; always there were difficulties to be overcome. As the tour went on one thing became abundantly clear—the Forces want and appreciate good entertainment. They like good drama. Given enthusiasm and determination on the part of those who can provide it, there is no reason why they should not have it. All who took part in the tour were amateurs who had their own job to do during the day. It meant hard work and late hours, but the happy comradeship, the fun that was had, and, above all, the sense of doing something worthwhile, more than compensated for any sacrifice involved. A second play is now in course of preparation. The good work will go on.

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AMATEUR STAGE

WHEN amateurs devote themselves to producing original work they are serving their art to the best purpose. For this good reason any new play staged by an amateur group deserves the encouragement of full criticism, and a production in London recently on its own merits is worthy of notice.

Harvest in Springtime, by Parnell Bradbury, was produced at Tavistock Little Theatre. Using only three characters in one setting, economy in means could hardly go further in telling a slight story of pre-war Nazi Germany. A Major von Merlitz, living on memories of a more liberal Germany, cannot accept the Hitler creed. His daughter, Olga, is an ardent disciple of the new party that is to restore Germany to the heights.

A fugitive writer takes refuge in their

Notes and Topics

home, and stays overnight, being received with ardour by the father and with suspicious hostility by the daughter. By the next day he has secured Olga's love, they make their escape to the frontier, and the Major is left to face the bullets of the stormtroopers seeking the writer.

Telling this story in a full-length play, the author relies on talk and not on action. There is unending discussion on the merits of the Nazi creed as father and daughter and writer see it. But the amount of dramatic action actually seen on the stage would not overcrowd a one-act play.

It is good, if one-sided, talk, for the author has had the courage of giving a purely German case to a British audience at a time when we are engaged in fighting that creed. His courage, even knowledge of the enemy, is unquestionable, but his judgment in offering his play in this form as entertainment to-day in a British theatre is more open to question.

Very largely, he falls on technique. It is a task for a master dramatist to use only three people to populate a stage for a full evening's performance. The risk of monotony is overpowering. Repeated duologues; a bare, empty stage; waits to cover entrances and exits; these spell strain for an audience.

Another illustration of this principle occurs in the second act. Olga, hitherto shown as a tense young Nazi, has dinner with father and guest off stage. On returning, we are told that at the dinner she has been her natural self, gay, smiling, warm and human. The audience were not allowed to see that mood, but they were hungry for it to relieve the tension of a whole first act of Hitler adoration.

So Olga, on whom the weight of the play rested, for it is her change of heart leading to elopement with the writer that provides the mainspring of the story, was shown throughout largely in one mood and manner. Evelyn Bannister accepted this heavy task,

(Continued overleaf)

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THE STAGE DIRECTOR
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making us fully believe in her Nazi worship but rather failing to persuade us that she had lost her heart to the writer. The omission was not with her acting, but in the writing of her part. It was much too stiff, lacking variety and tempo. Her voice carries well, she has good stage presence, and is obviously an amateur with experience. How wide her scope may be could not be judged from this play, but it would be interesting to see her in comedy.

H. Clifford Hendry caught the mood and spirit of the Major, a pleasant performance. The author played the writer. This dual role of dramatist and actor should be of value to him, for Mr. Bradbury has excellent promise of using the theatre to good purpose. He must always remember the audience is a living third partner, which pays good money to be entertained. And variety is the spice of stage entertainment. Also, economy of cast should not be carried to excess.

An attractive curtain setting was used—but the producer must beware of inaudibility when characters speak with their backs to the audience.

Croydon Operatic and Dramatic Association gave *Merrie England* for a week in August at the Grand Theatre. They are now casting *Bitter Sweet* and *Carmen* for October and November, and invite new playing members. Also for a dramatic section opening with *As You Like It* at Purley in October. All applications for membership to The Hon. Sec. at the Green Room Club, 117, High Street, Croydon.

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changed without anyone being the wiser. Harold Turner performs Death's meaningless leaps and pirouettes with fine spirit but only his macabre make-up and acting give any indication of what he is representing. Tarakanova as the Temptress is equally dependent on an excellent make-up and costume. There is some effective static and fresco-like grouping but Miss Inglesby cannot keep the pattern of her groups in motion and she consistently overcrows her canvas. The invasion of some young women in mauve in the last scene badly holds up the dramatic progress, and she makes the mistake, which Ashton in *The Wise Virgins* avoided, of masking the poses of her Cherubim by an overcrowded stage. The scene with the Kinsmen is given an unaffected charm by the dancing of a child, Maureen Sims, and it is good to hear again Leslie French's beautiful speaking of Everyman. Rex Whistler's Romanesque décor and William Chappell's costumes give the thing the splendour of a mediaeval pageant, but though the Strauss music is impressive I doubt the musical taste of splitting up three unrelated symphonic poems to make a ballet score.

The Ballet Guild.

Something of the above applies to the choreography of Molly Lake, whose new Mozart ballet, *The Nymphenburg Garden*, was given in the short season of the Ballet Guild at the Rudolf Steiner Hall in August. Miss Lake is an experienced dancer who can create some pretty poses and tricky steps, and the pas-de-deux in her new ballet has some "lifts" of original charm; but she lacks the sense of a choreographic idea that makes a ballet something more than a *suite de danses*, and even in *La Petite Fadette*, which has a definite story, dramatic unity hardly exists. The ballets were prettily dressed and the dancing was a credit to the training of the dancers, but such performances, depending on an irregular company and necessarily inadequate music, can be of little value except as an indication of what might be done in happier times. The work of the Ballet Guild in creating a valuable Ballet library and museum, in arranging lectures and running an obviously efficient school of dancing, is its chief importance at the moment.

For anyone interested in these activities the address of the Ballet Guild headquarters is 44a, Loudoun Road, N.W.8.

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